

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6528

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINR, EI, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: PROVO "POLICE"

1. BRITISH HAVE BEEN CRITICIZED FROM THREE DIRECTIONS FOR LETTING PROVO SINN FEIN/IRA SET UP A CATHOLIC "POLICE FORCE." NI PROTEST-ANTS, NI CATHOLIC SDLP PARTY, AND DUBLIN GOVT ARE ALL VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED. THIS IS AN INTERESTING ALLIANCE (AND ONE WHICH CANNOT LAST LONG). WE RECALL NO PREVIOUS OCCASION WHEN THESE DISPARATE FORCES AGREED SO STRONGLY ON ANYTHING AS ON UNDESIRABILITY OF GIVING PROVOS A LEGITIMATE POLICE ROLE.

2. FACED WITH THIS KIND OF PRESSURE, BRITISH HAVE TRIED TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT PROVOS HOLD NO CARTE BLANCHE, THOUGH GOI IS NOT COMPLETELY REASSURED. JUDGING FROM EMBASSY LONDON'S 2929 BRITISH ARE ENTIRELY WILLING TO CONFRONT PROVOS ON POLICE ISSUE, EVEN IF IT MEANS THE END OF THE IRA TRUCE.

3. THERE SEEMS TO BE TACIT ACCEPTANCE HERE THAT PROVOS CAN BE OFFERED THREE THINGS: (A) SOME "INCIDENT CENTERS" TO AVOID TRUCE MISUNDERSTANDINGS, (B) NO LARGE-SCALE RETURN OF RUC POLICE TO HARD-LINE REPUBLICAN AREAS, AND (C) THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE AN ENTRY INTO PEACEFUL POLITICS. NO ONE HERE KNOWS WHETHER THIS WILL

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BE ENOUGH TO SATISFY PROVOS. THEY MUST VIEW PEACE AS AN OPPORT-

UNITY TO ACHIEVE WHAT THEY FAILED TO ACHIEVE BY VIOLENCE. COMMUNITY "POLICE" OR "PEACE-KEEPING" FORCES WERE APPARENTLY ONE OF THE GOALS. IF THIS GOAL CANNOT BE ACHIEVED, PROVOS MAY CONCLUDE THAT THEY ARE BETTER OFF GOING BACK TO TERRORISM. BEST HOPE MUST BE THAT PROVOS HAVE DECIDED THEY CAN NOW MAKE SOME SLID POLITICAL GAINS IF THEY MAINTAIN TRUCE. OUR SOURCES THINK THAT SINN FEIN/IRA CAN WIN ONLY ABOUT THREE SEATS IN CONSTITUTIONAL ELECTIONS (OUT OF 78). PROVOS, HOWEVER, MAY BE MORE OPTIMISTIC. THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN VERY GOOD AT REALISM.

4. ONE OF CURIOUS ASPECTS OF "PROVO POLICE" ISSUE IS THAT SOLID PEOPLE HERE REALLY SUSPECT BRITISH HAVE SECRET AGREEMENT WITH PROVOS. WE FIND THIS HARD TO BELIEVE, THOUGH IT MAY BE THAT THE BRITISH PURPOSELY LEFT SOME WIDE GRAY AREAS IN THEIR TRUCE TALKS. IRA TRUCE WAS AN IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT AND WAS (IN OUR OPINION) WORTH SOME TRADE-OFFS. IF WE WERE TO SUSPECT BRITISH OF ANY CLEVER MANEUVER, WE WOULD BE MORE INCLINED TO THINK THAT THEY WANTED TO FORCE THE WARRING COMMUNITIES TO MAKE UP THEIR MINDS ABOUT A POLICE FORCE. THE PRESENT FUROR IS HELPING TO MAKE THE OLD RUC LOOK BETTER THAN EVER.

5. IN REAL LIFE, WE SUPPOSE THE BRITISH WERE NOT TRYING TO DO ANYTHING AT ALL EXCEPT ACHIEVE PEACE, WHICH REQUIRED AN INTRICATE BALANCING ACT. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR THAT THE ACT HAS SUCCEEDED.
MOORE

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